

From: Ellis, Alex

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To: Alex Ellis (aellis@bgrpr.com) <aellis@bgrpr.com>

Subject: ICYMI: Indian Amb. Sandhu's WashPost op-ed today

Hello. In case you missed it, here is the link to and text of today's Washington Post op-ed by Amb. Taranjit Singh Sandhu on the crucial role of the India-U.S. health-care partnership in the battle against the pandemic.

Thank you.

Best,

Alex Ellis

[The U.S.-India health-care partnership will be crucial in the battle against the coronavirus](#)

Opinion by Taranjit Singh Sandhu

August 24, 2020

Taranjit Singh Sandhu is India's ambassador to the United States.

As both India and the United States combat a pandemic of unprecedented scale, we have drawn upon the strength of our long-standing health-care ties to help us better understand the novel [coronavirus](#) and find workable solutions.

In India, the government and the private sector have worked together to ensure the integrity of medical supply chains, and essential medicines from India have continued to reach the United States and some 150 partner countries. But more urgently, the India-U.S. cooperation is proving crucial to confront health challenges posed by the pandemic, including future vaccine development and distribution.

From therapeutics to diagnostics, the medical supply industry in India has ramped up production to meet domestic needs and also respond, where feasible, to global needs. Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the initiative of bringing together leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to deliberate on collaborative efforts to combat the disease, including establishing a SAARC Emergency Response Fund.

And as we move toward an effective vaccine for the novel coronavirus, India's research laboratories and manufacturing facilities — which produce more than [60 percent of the world's vaccines in a normal year](#) — are integral to the effort. There are at least four ongoing vaccine [development programs](#) between Indian and [U.S. firms and research institutions](#).

Over the years, scientific cooperation has become a critical element of India's expanding strategic ties with the United States. Last year India and the United States [signed an agreement to promote scientific exchanges](#), cooperative research projects and the establishment of innovative public-private partnerships. U.S.-India scientific collaborations have expanded in fields ranging from health and energy to earth and ocean sciences, and from space to agriculture. Such collaborations have fostered innovation, empowered industry and economic growth.

Further, under the bilateral [Health Dialogue](#) that commenced in 2015, supported by private-sector engagements, India's partnership with the United States in the health sector has yielded significant results on a global scale. The collaboration under the Vaccine Action Program resulted in the development of the ROTAVAC vaccine against the rotavirus, which causes severe diarrhea in children. The rollout of an affordable vaccine by an Indian company has enabled its use in several developing countries. This success stands as a true testament to the benefits of the India-U.S. partnership for the greater good of humanity. Today there are more than 200 active collaborations between the U.S. National Institutes of Health network of labs and leading research agencies in India, all focused on delivering affordable health-care solutions.

The India-U.S. partnership in medical research has been complemented by the strength of our cooperation in pharmaceuticals. India's capabilities in R&D and in manufacturing have made its pharmaceutical sector the world's third-largest by volume. These strengths have been bolstered by government incentives to encourage investments in the manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients. Indian generic drugs have found a ready market across the globe, with Indian firms supplying about 40 percent of generic formulations marketed in the United States. This has allowed American health-care consumers to save billions and enjoy enhanced access to quality medicines. The pharmaceutical sector has also been a significant job creator in the United States, with Indian firms investing billions to establish manufacturing facilities in different states in this country.

When the coronavirus outbreak began, the network of existing collaborations between our countries sprang into action. Using the platform of the India-U.S. Science and Technology Forum, an initiative led by both governments, calls were put out to support joint research and incubate start-up engagements. The initiative was directed at developing technologies for the containment and management of the novel coronavirus, including diagnostics and therapeutics.

As a country we are committed to increasing health-care spending to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product by 2025. Regulatory reforms, policy actions and investment incentives are imparting fresh dynamism to health care in India. Ayushman Bharat, the National Health Protection Mission, is the world's largest such public-funded program. The pandemic has also not stopped India from undertaking bold initiatives. The recently launched National Digital Health Mission will facilitate the creation of a virtuous health ecosystem, expanding access for hitherto underserved populations. All this opens up immense opportunities for expanding the India-U.S. health-care partnership.

Meanwhile, we continue to combat the virus at home. While the number of coronavirus cases in India has surpassed [3 million](#), we are encouraged that the recovery rate is also significantly high, at more than 70 percent, and the case fatality rate is below 2 percent. India's health-care providers, comprising 1 million mostly female workers, have also risen to the challenge and have been active at the clinical, treatment and grass-roots levels, playing an essential role in pandemic control.

The current pandemic has made it clear that ensuring affordable and timely access to health care is a priority for all. It has emphasized the need to diversify health supply chains and foster new international partnerships for global health safety. India is well positioned to offer a reliable alternative, with its strengths in manufacturing and innovation, and with its skilled workforce. As societies that respect innovation, India and the United States can do much to provide solutions to the novel coronavirus pandemic and to build a healthier, safer world beyond.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/24/us-india-health-care-partnership-will-be-crucial-battle-against-coronavirus/>

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